

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Angela Bellas, and I reside in Manchester, Connecticut. I am a PhD Candidate at the UConn School of Social Work and a founding member of Uniting for a Safe Inclusive Community-Manchester (USIC) and CT Mutual Aid: East of the River.

**I stand in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS.** Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

Healthcare is a human right. As someone who lives with chronic health issues, I am all too aware of the critical importance of access to healthcare coverage. I have been uninsured in the past and I have also accessed healthcare through Husky A. When I was uninsured, I avoided seeking healthcare until my need was acute. I know this is an all too familiar story that leads to increased suffering, and ultimately- higher public health costs. I know the moment of shock and heightened anxiety when you open a medical bill for thousands of dollars and have no way to pay it. My father was a dialysis patient for the last three years of his life, struggling with chronic kidney and heart disease. Dialysis is hard enough without the compounding stress (stress that we know is also associated with multiple negative health indicators) of overwhelmingly high medical bills. I do not want any of my immigrant friends or family members to live with the economic and psychological stress associated with being uninsured. I want to live in a world where all people have access to quality universal healthcare and ensuring healthcare access for all immigrants in our state is of critical importance.

My father was also an immigrant and growing up in an immigrant led household taught me the value of vibrant culture and staying connected to my ancestors' strength and wisdom; the value of hard work and caring for community. Currently I am in community with many immigrants and immigrant families through my work with USIC. Many of my immigrant friends remind me of my father- incredibly hardworking, loving, committed to family and community- essential workers and pillars of our community. Immigrants kept our economy afloat throughout a global pandemic that has claimed nearly one million lives in the U.S. alone- too often experiencing the racialized health disparities only exacerbated and illuminated by COVID-19. Two years after the initial lockdown period, when so many have suffered and died, it is inexcusable that we do not have true universal healthcare. Passing SB 284 will constitute another step in the right direction. In 2022, it is horrifying that there are children still not able to access healthcare. While we must continue to work for healthcare for all immigrants, at bare minimum we need the Connecticut legislature to pass SB 284 and codify the rights of all children up to the age of 18 to access healthcare through Husky regardless of immigration status.

I am also the mother of a 7-year old child. Every time my child is sick, I am grateful that I can bring her to her pediatrician or to Connecticut Children's Medical Center without debating whether I can afford the medical bills that will follow. Every parent/caregiver needs this peace of mind. I cannot bear the injustice of children as young as 9-years old aging out of Husky coverage, and neither should you. **Please pass SB 284** out of committee and champion this bill expanding Husky coverage for children up to age 18 regardless of immigration status. As we move forward, I implore you as members of the Human Service Committee to champion and expand Husky coverage for all of our immigrant friends and neighbors.

Sincerely,  
Angela Bellas, MSW, PhD Candidate  
Uniting for a Safe Inclusive Community- Manchester (USIC)